

## Tiki and Pou: Free Sculpture and Applied

By GILBERT ARCHEY

The impression one receives from the frequently made comparison between Polynesian art as rectilinear and Maori art as curvilinear is of a dominance in both of pattern. Undoubtedly pattern comprises an important part of Maori art, but it is by no means the whole. Of that other form of wood-carving, figure-sculpture, a good number of examples have found homes in museums; there might possibly have been more but for the vulnerability of "heathen idols" to destruction when they ceased to hold the *mana* of religious significance, or when as in New Zealand inter-tribal wars ensued with the possession of fire-arms. On the other hand the very elegance of decorative pattern has been reason for its preservation, largely through acquisition by Europeans, and, accordingly, for its appearing today as the greater part of Maori art.

The present paper is on Maori sculpture. Our third detailed account of a single aspect of Maori wood-carving, it should, more logically than "*Tau rāpa: the canoe sternpost*" (1938), or "*Tau ihu: the canoe prow*" (1956), have been the first, for it deals with what is obviously the least complex form of Maori carving and one that we have ourselves put forward (1955) as the base and starting place of its development. This paper, like the others, is mainly descriptive; while it may offer some interpretative comments, it will perhaps trend more towards appreciation of the aesthetic qualities manifested in this stone tool endeavour and of the design concept of its craftsmen revealed even in the early stage of applied sculpture.

The most directly naturalistic carvings we present (Plate 13) reveal some of the limitations common in primitive sculpture; restraint for example, or, rather, restriction in form and attitude due in some measure no doubt to the form and proportion of the tree trunk from which it was carved; also a general absence of finer modelling and details of form, features generally regarded as difficult to achieve with blunt stone tools. Nevertheless the Bay of Plenty sculpture shown on Plate 13 Fig. 1 has a clear expression, of almost portrait quality, generic, maybe, rather than particular. Although we have no means or warrant for judging it as a likeness, we feel that at least it has within it the serenity and dignity the Maori expected to find in the *rangatira*, the leader. Even its hands, mutilated though they now are, bespeak a degree of firmness and poise. We would hardly say so much for the other carving on this plate, until, by covering the uncertain and ambiguous legs, we see again a head of character above a firmly stanced torso.

Other images and carved figures that we shall mention have personal names; no doubt the two just described stood for known individuals and this is the purpose for all Maori figure carving—

commemoration of a contemporary notable or of a past ancestor. Maori religion had its general Polynesian gods who also were persons, or personifications of nature: Tane, god of the earth and all that grows thereon; Tangaroa, of the sea; Tu, of war; but no images of gods are known, only of men. Similarly in Polynesia the great nature gods seem very seldom, if ever, to have been made in graven image. Being regarded as spirits they would, on invocation, descend into or abide within objects of many kinds, animate and inanimate—great sennit bundles or wrappings of *tapa*. When images are known they seem to have been of a lowlier status, or of a more domestic nature, fetishes almost as in the case of Rarotonga fishermen's gods. While, as will be recalled Captain Cook saw "a very extraordinary creature call'd Mahuwe" (Journal, Hakluyt Soc. 1955, ed. J. C. Beaglehole, p. 111), a figure of a man made in basket-work  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet high, here again, as Katherine Luomala (1955, p. 94) reminds us, Maui was only a demi-god, a malformed child of the gods who suffered mischance during one of his thousand mischievous tricks and lost his immortality. Thus he was an ancestor rather than a god. It would appear that in African sculpture also men only and not gods are represented; could it be that among primitive people the image maker required a model or at least a subject not too far distant in memory or too remote in physical concept?

We have mentioned free sculpture, but the figures of Plate 14, although they stand singly, are not quite free sculpture; neither is that of Plate 15 nor the massive Pukaki of Plate 16. All of these figures are broad across and shallow in depth, as if they were relief carvings that had become separated from their background. This characteristic recalls Roger Fry's suggestion that the statue may not have been originally free-standing at all but had developed from bas-relief (Vision and Design, 1937, Pelican; pp. 88-89). Polynesian sculptures do not, however, exhibit this feature, or only very rarely.

No restriction in respect to the available material would have prevented the Maori from giving full natural depth to his sculptures; it could be, therefore, that the frequent setting up of these figures in front of or alongside buildings as described by early travellers, or their incorporation in broad palisade gateways, had influenced the proportions.

That there is essentially something of the relief sculpture in them is suggested by the typical arrangement of their limbs which, whenever they are at all free from the body are almost invariably in line with the front of the figure; they seldom project forward as in Hawaiian images.

This may be observed in the great palisade gateway Rangitakaroro (Plate 14, Fig. 1) from the northern end of Lake Okataina. Each of the two surmounting figures has a width greater than natural and less depth, the arms being aligned with the front surface as we have mentioned. It will also be noticed that the pose of the arms, although natural, is already assuming the order or character of a design. The "top-hat" these figures appear to wear is merely the carver's representation of the customary binding of the hair into a top-knot clipped short

above the binding. In a later illustration (Plate 20) we shall see this natural feature take on a stylized, decorative form.

Figure 2 of Plate 14 is a *pou rahui*, a post set up to mark a *tapu* area. In 1846 a landslide from the cliffs under which nestled Te Heuheu's settlement at Te Rapa near Tokaanu buried the village and for two years this figure marked as *tapu* the site of the tragedy. Some time after 1848 when the *tapu* had been raised, the carving was erected in the Tokaanu churchyard remaining there until 1926 when the tribes concerned, accepting the suggestion of Te Rangi Hiroa, placed it in the Auckland Museum.

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1. Carved figure (68.5 cm.); the god Rongo, from Rarotonga. British Museum. (The measure is the height of figure only, excluding base or support.)

Both this *rahui* carving and the statue Pukaki disclose the naturalistic beginning of a very commonly rendered, one might almost say stereotyped, form of decorative design\* on wall panels or *pou*. This is a group of people. They are not presented, however, as a portrait group, nor yet in the narrative form of a Nottingham alabaster religious group, but instead as a main figure bearing on its front the subsidiary figures in relief.

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\* Described below, p. 100.



In the Te Rapa *rahui* the chieftain, or husband, stands erect, his wife in inverted position is below, with the children in relief on her body. In Pukaki (Plate 16), a massive figure group from Te Ngae, Lake Rotorua, the wife again is below (the bottom of the carving had decayed before it was removed from the ground) and the children are carved on the father's body. Children, or so we suppose them to be, are also carved on the parent in Plate 15, and Plate 17, Fig. 1.

This grouping or composition is not peculiar to New Zealand. The British Museum possesses a wooden image (Text fig. 1) from Rarotonga bearing small figures on its breast and arms, while from Rurutu in the Austral Group comes a large wooden figure with no less than twenty subsidiary body figures, the head bearing another ten arranged to indicate features. (Edge-Partington Album, First ser. 20; cf. also Hewicker and Tischner, 1954, pls. 80-82.)

In Pukaki the eyes are indicated only by shadow from the eyebrows, an unusual device, followed, it will be remembered in the Rano-rarakau statues of Easter Island (Metreaux 1957), and also in the small black stone pendant from Waitotara in this museum (see Hamilton, Maori Art, pl. LVI, fig. 4; Archey, 1949, South Sea Folk, fig. 24).

### **Sculpture Style in Polynesia.**

Mention has been made of the fixed stance of Maori sculpture; it must be admitted that its figures lack vigour of pose either in body or limbs. The same can be said of figure carving throughout central and southern Polynesia\*; its greatest achievement is massive grandeur, nor is there any great range in variety in facial expression, the extremes being the grand inscrutability of Easter Island statues and the glaring defiance of the Maori; but again, the latter all too soon becomes pattern. We have to look towards the north-eastern and northern fringe of Polynesia to find full-figure attitudes of strength and movement, expressed vigorously in Hawaii and less so in the Marquesas. While the chief elaboration in Hawaii is in the extensions of the feathered head-dress, there is undoubted strength of attitude in figure sculpture and vigorous almost acrobatic bodily movement in the grouped figures which support food bowls or drums.

We have become used to seeing, in African figures, surfaces so clear-cut as to intensify the volume-expression of the sculpture, and while this is by no means the only technique in African carving we do feel, in finding it so strongly developed, that it expresses a conscious awareness of a relation between surface and contained form. It could of course be no more than the technique-outcome of the iron blade; but if this were so one would not expect to find comparable surface-rendering by stone-tool craftsmen.

Such are found however: in Hawaiian sculpture for example, and also, although in a lesser degree, in Marquesan. So sharply defined do surfaces and their edges appear in certain Hawaiian pieces as to raise the question of their age and the possibility of their being steel carved. Dr. Kenneth Emory to whom I referred the point considers that

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\* Western and Central Polynesian carved figures have been well documented and described by P. H. Buck (1935).



the British Museum figure in Hewicker and Tischner's *Oceanic Art*, Plate 88 (an idol from the heiau of Hale-o-Keawe at the Puihonua or "City of Refuge," Honaunau, Hawaii), and two similar ones in the Bishop Museum could be steel cut, although, he adds, they have been so polished as to make it difficult to tell. But the clear cut facets I have in mind are those revealed in Hewicker's Plate 83, and on this example Dr. Emory points to the short shallow cuts as probably indicating stone-tool work rather than steel.

At all events this latter figure and the Marquesan figure of Hewicker's Plate 91 clearly point to tool-consciousness, at least on behalf of surface-texture, and to the effective results obtainable even with stone chisels. As to iron, we agree with Dr. Emory that its introduction must have been too late to have influenced the major form in these figures. In other words the basic modelling of Hawaiian sculpture was manifestly the outcome of clear form-consciousness combined with the technical skill to achieve it even with primitive tools; it is indeed a creative art.

Maori carvers however, although possessed of the finest tools of greenstone, do not in their figures realize such sharply defined sculptural form; it would appear that their interest inclined more towards formalism of design in posture and a surface texture of decorative overlay. Occasionally, in small undecorated figures we do observe muscular form and volume clearly developed. Such are text figure 2, and figure 1 of Plate 20, the latter a beautifully finished and altogether charming little piece. In large and massive sculpture the expanded surfaces have proved a temptation to decorate, not merely so far as would produce a surface-texture, but frequently so strongly as to compete for attention with the figure itself. (Plate 21.)

In view, then, of the high quality of the greenstone chisels the Maori had for his work, and of his sure command of elaboration in design and intricacy in decoration, we should, perhaps, turn from attributing limited modelling to the poor quality of tools, and realize instead that it was not incompetence that lessened his achievement but another interest that guided it in a different direction.

### **Stylized Tiki.**

Although naturalistic human figures are not uncommon in Maori carving, they are I think outnumbered by those of stylized form. We have already seen, in the two realistic figures of Plates 15 and 16, what might be termed a first degree of formalization of features, though of an expression somewhat stolid; when, however, really vigorous facial emotion is intended, it seems always to be expressed by staring eyes, wide open mouth and protruding tongue rendered in conventionalized manner (Plate 19). One can well imagine these enlarged features, introduced as a means of attaining a certain facial expression, themselves soon coming to engage the interest of the carver, providing him with an opportunity to extend and expand them further and further, and, with added ornament, bringing him in time to the conventional mask that is now so constant a feature of Maori carving. Interest in design and decoration would seem to have become dominant and to have prevailed over portrayal of emotion, sometimes even

reducing the mask elements, notwithstanding that they arose originally as defiance, to a stereotyped formula. The inclination towards decoration appears on the body also as we see in text figures 3 to 5, incipiently in the hands of figure 4 and more fully in 5 where the

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Fig. 2.

Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.

Fig. 5.

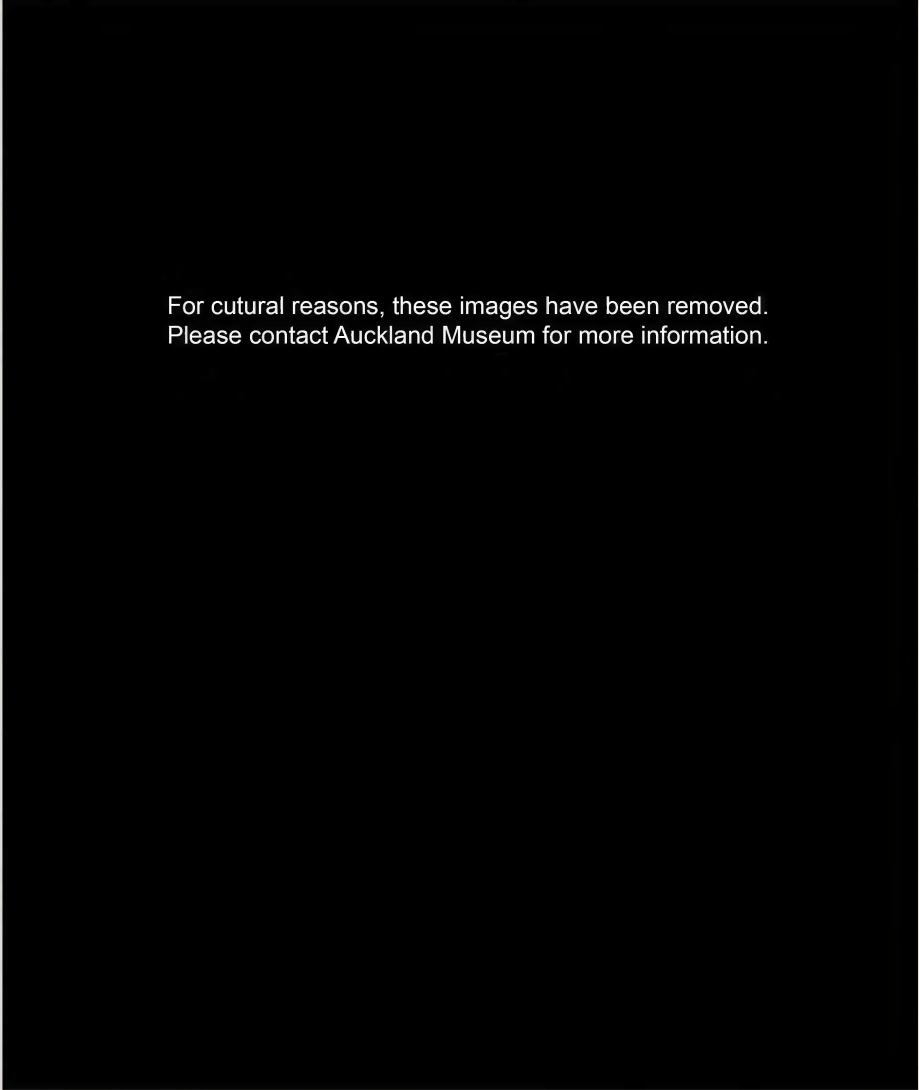
2. *Poito*: wooden net float (26 cm.), Lake Rotoiti. A.M. 40.
3. *Tiki* (82 cm.) from the top of a *pa* post. Opotiki, A.M. 5167.
4. *Tiki* (88 cm.).
5. *Tiki* (94 cm.) from a *pa* post. Locality unknown. A.M. 9835.

hands, now transformed into a pair of *manaia* faces, become a patterned decoration for the front of the body. These three figures show, both in hands and faces, the Maori change of mood from realism towards stylized decoration, moods that can lead to either of the two aspects of applied sculpture—on the one hand to the relief decoration of a broad plank and on the other to the incorporation of the *tiki* within the centre-pole support for a building.

### Applied Sculpture.

Maori wood carving is in large part, perhaps in major part, an art of architecture; sculpture and house-building are linked in the one act of commemoration, or personification. The carved meeting house, *whare-runanga*, did not merely receive the name of the tribal canoe ancestor, it stood for him, as the named wall-posts stood for and were the whole family of tribal forefathers. The Maori way of thinking about the ancestors of his house appears in characteristic expression in Te Rangihiroa's concluding remarks on houses in "The Coming of

the Maori" (p. 136). "The scattering of village life leaves some of the carved houses standing lone and dejected as if their souls had fled. But when tribal custom assembles the people under the ancestral roof again the soul returns. The guests can still recline at ease as they listen to the oratory of welcome and reply which the passing years have not dulled. To those who can feel the stirring and throbbing of the past, the graven features of the ancestors standing along the walls look down and relax into a smile."



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Text Fig. 6.

Text Fig. 7.

Text Fig. 8.

6. *Amo* (187 cm.): front verandah post of a carved house. Locality unknown. A.M. 22050.2.
7. *Amo*: (182 cm.). Rotorua district. A.M. 6183.
8. House plank, from near Auckland. Wanganui Museum.



In incorporating the human figures (*tiki*) into posts (*pou*) the Maori had better success with broad planks than with narrow posts. Perhaps it would be fairer to say that he was disinclined to elongate his ancestor unduly in order to fuse and blend him into a slender upright. The examples we illustrate (Plate 17, Fig. 2 and text figures 6 and 7) are about as far as he went in this direction. Apparently he thought that a better way to meet this particular problem in applied sculpture was to carve two figures, or three or more, one above the other: so we find *amo* (uprights of a house front) with two *tiki* (Plate 18) and *ngawaeruae* (door posts) with several (Plate 26, Fig. 3). It will be noted that, in both of these exterior structures the super-imposed figures are of the same size; later we shall see some variety here in *interior* house carvings. It will also be observed in the next section on *pou*, and in an example given here, text figure 8, that there was no hesitation in lengthening a figure to make of it a *design*.

### Pou.

William's Dictionary (VI ed.) gives *pou*, a post, pole; and *poupou*, upright slabs forming the solid frame-work of the walls of a *whare*. We have seen the *tiki* absorbed into the tall slender post *pou*; the six figures of Plate 20 show the human figure in as many stages of broadening and sinking back in relief to form, in the last two, the standard decoration of the *poupou*, the "ancestors standing along the walls" of Te Rangi Hiroa's remark quoted above.

These are not, however, placed together here merely to illustrate an evolutionary series, though I have no doubt they do, for it is difficult to suppose such a progression not to have occurred. What is more important to realize is that any one carver at, say, the time of Cook's voyages could have carved his ancestor in any one of the degrees of stylization and relief here shown. The art was versatile; stylization was not fixed at a stage. The carver envisaged his figures in any one form or degree of stylization or relief, and elected to work in the manner and style he judged most appropriate to the task before him. Part of the enjoyment of Maori art is this very versatility, this infinite variety, and in saying this I mean that the enjoyment was equally shared by carver and observer.

Almost inevitably an overlay of decoration followed (Plate 21) where every enlarged anatomical feature became a field of lively spirals, spirals that on the four great limb bosses of this *pou* almost dominate the central figure, robust and dynamic though it be.

Attention was drawn above (p. 96) to the family group composed of the ancestor, his wife, and the children carved in relief on his body, and to a similar family presentation in the Cook and Austral Islands. In New Zealand this theme also appeared in stylized decorative version. The two *poupou* of Plate 22 show, first in Fig. 1, a large *tiki* in relief with an elongated figure curving across the body upwards and outwards until it reaches the narrow space at the left side of the *tiki*'s head. Here the head becomes stretched in profile manner to fill this space completely. Another subsidiary figure, full-face but with body and limbs in stance, fills the corresponding space to the right of the

face. So the *pou* carries an ancestor and at least two children, decoratively here as naturalistically before. Figure 2 is a balanced composition with the same portrayal, only this time with a pair of almost identical superimposed *manaia*, carried vertically *on* the body; here again each of the elongated heads occupies the margin alongside the face. Plate 23 shows two further examples, though with the subsidiary figures no longer on the body but reduced to a pair of much stylized elongated *manaia* faces, filling the same narrow space as before.

These stylized *pou* frequently include also another figure (the mother?) immediately below the main *tiki*. This figure is a reptile in Plate 23, Fig. 2, a carving done in the 1860's.

It is seldom that we are vouchsafed information as to the subject matter of a composition and even here we can only infer that what we see is the symbolic representation of the family group; it is a kind of formalism as in heraldry, and we could have missed its meaning had it not sometimes appeared in a more natural manner.

While the Maori could readily present the human figure in lively naturalism (Fig. 9), we encounter this form only in relief and as part



Text Fig. 9.

9. Naturalistic figure (56 cm.) from door-lintel. Patetonga. A.M. 6189.

of a composition, where it is the arrangement or succession of figures that becomes the rhythm. A single figure in an attitude of movement is always stylized and in relief, and can be so aptly organized as to express in the rhythm of its own parts the form and proportions of the plank or panel that carries it. This is well marked in figure 1 of Plate 24. In figure 2 the figure-attitude is static, the rhythm being taken up by the strongly developed surface decoration. This *pou*

carries a curious medley with the quaintness of the design enhanced by the clarity of the carving.

The carver's disinclination to elongate the single figure embodied in a post is illustrated in Plate 25, Fig. 1 where the two superimposed, albeit squat, figures seem the better fitted to give strength and support. The neighbouring figure 2 presents the same combination in low relief and with a design or arrangement that recognizes the principle of establishing simple uprightness of form in the lower, basic half of a tall slab, and moving towards variety and lightness above. The third (fig. 3) almost echoes the classic orders of architecture in its progression from the solidarity of naturalism below, through smaller, lighter, mask-faced decorative form in the middle course, to the still smaller, livelier contorted uppermost *manaia*. This is by no means an isolated example that had as it were happened upon this satisfactory order. The arrangement appears often enough to assure us that the Maori clearly understood this particular canon of decorative art. The *tohunga*, in his teaching of apprentices, may even have enunciated the principle; but the opportunity of our ascertaining this is long past.

Still another theme of decoration appears in Plate 26 where figure 1 is relatively simple, comprising a broad profile figure below surmounted by a full face *tiki*; a point worth noting is the neck of each entering the mouth, a frequent fancy in lively designs. Figure 2 is a further intricacy which it is easier almost to invite you to unravel yourselves than to explain. The two main figures and their several supplementaries might possibly be an involved Laocöon-like version of the family group already described.

Plate 27 tells its own story, or perhaps fails to; it leaves one curious to know what the Maori community made of, or did with, the local Picasso.

### Other Forms.

The Moriori of the Chatham Islands ventured into the representation of the human figure in two very different directions—that of incised outlines on the bark of trees and that of figure sculpture. While the former were numerous, exhibiting a great variety of stylized designs (Jefferson, 1955), the latter is known from only two examples, a squat pumice figure in the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, and a slender wooden carving, 105 cm. high, in this museum. From the illustration of these two in Plate 28 their common feature, the emphasized representation of ribs, is immediately apparent, recalling the emaciated looking rib exposure of the small *toromiro* wood carvings from Easter Island.

While there are other resemblances between the Chatham and Easter Island figures, they are not exact parallels; they are also accompanied by differences such as the Moriori carving's horizontal eyebrows, small ears, rib-less thorax, i.e. ribs only on loins. The Easter wood figures have a small carved tufted beard; in the Chatham Island carving there are holes in the chin, presumably for insertion of hair tufts.



Rib-carving does not occur elsewhere in Polynesia; the similarity might betoken a genetic relationship between the two areas; on the other hand the ribs could possibly indicate emaciation associated with two similar but quite independent episodes in the history of the two peoples. Both of them doubtless made long and probably very hungry journeys as near-castaways before finding their final home. The representation of a considerably excess number of ribs in the wooden figure can, we think, be noted as a typical instance of decorative extension.

For the resemblances to indicate an art relationship one would expect the examples to be very early in the history of the two peoples. The Chatham Island carving looks old, but this raises the question as to the length of time a carving in soft wood could survive in the damp, wind-driven conditions of the Chatham Islands. But doubts and questions such as these notwithstanding, the two Chatham Island figures remain an intriguing and suggestive problem.

The inclusion of text figure 10 may be somewhat anomalous, because this central figure from the Kaitaia lintel is neither *tiki* nor *pou* as understood in this paper. It is, however, a presentation of the

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Text Fig. 10.

10. Central figure (17 cm.) of the Kaitaia carving, A.M. 6341.

human figure, though one very different in expression and form from other New Zealand *tiki*.

Its squat stance may not unreasonably be attributed to its being restricted to fit into the composition; in a way it is a design stylization. It is very unlike other Maori figure representations in features and attitude and especially in the purposeful placing of the hands. The tongue as a straight bar also appears in the Waitotara pendant referred to earlier, but the eyes in the latter are quite different, being reduced to indication by shadow. The Whangamumu chevroned pendant (Skinner 1934, fig. 125; Archey 1936, pl. 7, fig. 2) also has a tongue of like style, but again the eyes are different. The general form of the Waitotara pendant is that of the chevroned amulet, its notching along the edges being in all likelihood a reduced chevron pattern. It is interesting to find these three, related as their chevrons show them to be, differing so markedly in the representation of the head and face.

The curious carving, unfortunately of unknown locality, described by Kenneth P. Emory (1931, 253) displays suggestive resemblances to the Kaitaia carving, but it also exhibits as many differences even in the representation of the face.

That the Maori sculptor could become interested in a form or a surface in its own right is, we think, testified to in the "face" of figure 11. It is the head of a palisade post, one of the many that were

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Fig. 12.

Fig. 11.

11. Top of palisade post: (81 cm.). Locality unknown. A.M. 5483.  
12. Bone chest: (66 cm.). Hokianga district. A.M. 19458.

roughed out casually and with no need for or intention of giving them features; their purpose was no more than to proclaim to an approaching enemy "We are here in strength." In spite of its being cracked and split by exposure it still speaks of the care with which the carver fashioned just an oval, and of his sense of design in the cleanly cut recess for the stylized hand.

The same sense of sheer, smooth form confronts us in the coffin box from Northland (fig. 12). Like the central figure of the Kaitaia lintel it is somewhat foreign to an essay on *tiki* and *pou*, except that it also is a human image, albeit part abstract, or should we say part

relief; moreover it shows again how an independent creative idea of form itself could move the Maori figure sculptor.

Although the examples included in this paper illustrate the general trends of expression in the Maori carving of *tiki* and *pou*, they do not by any means exhaust the variety and versatility manifested throughout this particular field of Maori wood sculpture. The examples have been chosen for the most part from our own collection, partly because they were readily to hand for photographing and partly as a kind of illustrated catalogue whereby they are made available to other students. I think my New Zealand colleagues would agree that despite the many years of outflow of Maori carving to other countries, the greater number, at all events of large carvings, remain in this country, mostly in our museums. Many which stand in houses built during the nineteenth century have been well recorded by Phillipps (1952, 1955, 1956). Today we have growing a new body of carving in the great social houses commissioned by Maori communities during the past quarter century. Present day Maori carving, which was as it were reborn by the establishment of the School of Maori Art in 1925, is exercised almost entirely on house panels, at present the only source of demand. We hope the demand may extend and that the art may develop with a vigour and versatility comparable to the virile, enterprising art that existed in this country in the eighteenth century. It was an art well able to stand alongside the like arts of Polynesia even if rather more successfully in the decorative branches of wood carving than in figure sculpture.

### Discussion.

While the New Zealand Maori is at one with the rest of Polynesia in practising figure sculpture, and for the same purpose of commemoration, the style and manner of his work are not seen to be closely related to that of any other Polynesian group; each of these, indeed, displays its own characteristics. The wooden figures of Hawaii (Text fig. 13) present an active pose with freedom of limbs and a crisp rendering of planes and their conjunctions that gives clarity to sculptural expression. Faces may be carved in patternized exaggeration of features, but they do not thereby fall away from their avowed portrayal of violence or defiance. The elaborate crests, a treatment in wood of hair and beard or of feathered head-dress, are also robust and clear-cut. The Hawaiians were the most sculpturally aware of the Polynesians, at least in wood; the available stone, being coarsely vesicular, was intractable, and work in it was correspondingly stolid.

Marquesan sculpture stands close to Hawaiian; it, too, displays postural vigour, though less strongly, tending more towards the decorative stylization of attitude and features. Stone figures in this manner reached a high development in Hivaoa where a compact grey tuff was available. Mangarevan wooden images are the most naturalistic both in form and in bodily proportions; but it may be unsafe to generalize here because so few remain to us, and one of the few is quite stylized in outline. (Buck, 1939.)

It is in Raivavae that we find the clearest sculptural formalism; as least we observe this in two striking examples, the Oldman collection figure in wood now in this museum (Fig. 14) and the stone figure in



the Pitt-Rivers at Oxford (Fig. 15). Both of these display an interrelation of planes so clearly realized that it must, we feel, have been consciously striven for. The same intention is manifest in the formalized figures of Tahiti fan-handles. (Fig. 16.)

There are other High Island statues of lesser accomplishment, some that appear only as vague surface carving on coarse rock (Routledge, 1921); nevertheless Raivavae's largest statues (Buck, *Vikings of the Sunrise*, frontispiece) confront us with eight to twelve feet of massive, clearly stated sculptural strength. Although Raivavae sculptures are not by any means Easter Island statues for size or grandeur, they do seem to be treading the same path.

There were wooden images in other of the Austral Islands, but they became fuel for the gesture of religious renunciation many years ago and only the lare Rurutu box-figure (Edge Partington Album, first ser., pl. 20; Hewicker and Tischner, 1954, pl. 82) with its multiplicity of godlets has survived.

The Cook and Society Islands, notwithstanding undoubted differences in their figure representations, do betray a common relationship, for example in the disposal of arms and the clear shoulder-ridge or plane across the back. Several Austral examples also have this ridge. It is a loss to our knowledge that the great Mangaiian image O-rongo (Gill, 1880) should have been broken up for building stone, with no descriptive record of it save that of its size. Superimposed human figures are reported from both the Society and the Cook Islands.

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Fig. 13.

Fig. 14.

13. Hawaiian carved figure (105 cm.). Bishop Museum.

14. Wooden figure from Raivavae (64.5 cm.). Oldman Collection. A.M. 31499.

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Fig. 16.

Fig. 15.

15. Stone figure from Raivavae (94.4 cm.) on pedestal. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, P.R. 126 (H.).  
16. Fly whisk handle (10 cm.). Tahiti. A.M. 14509.

Tonga with three small wood sculptures known to us and Samoa with its single, Tonga-inspired example, form a region apart: these very similar figures, although their contours are smooth-surfaced, present powerfully developed volume. The Tongan ivory figurines, treated in the same style, being rather small for the adequate expression of volume, remain doll-like.

The fewness of Tongan figure sculptures and their possibly complete absence from Samoa stands in marked contrast to the variety recorded from eastern Polynesia and, particularly, from Hawaii. It can scarcely be attributed to a lack, in these richly endowed high islands, of material for sculpture; the poor quality of tools may be a likelier cause. Samoa is indeed a barren area in respect to wood-carving of any sort, sculpture or decorative pattern, and there seems to be no outstanding compensatory achievement, as for instance in lashing patterns or textiles.

Such resemblances as there may appear to be between the figures of New Zealand and the other areas should at least be noted, but with reserve in suggesting genetic relationship. There is in fact not much more to it than that features are formalized in Rarotonga and patternized in the Marquesas. Neither of them, however, really resembles the Maori mask; each area has worked out its own facial formula and its own manner of figure stylization and ornament.

If however we find, as I think we well might, a more likely relationship or alliance in the family group in relief, presented naturalistically in New Zealand, Rarotonga and Rurutu, and also in stylized decorative manner in New Zealand, the significance of this common feature occurring as a basic composition in their respective arts will not be overlooked. Here we may also recall that Rarotonga and New Zealand carving compositions alike present a basic rhythm of full-face *tiki* alternating with figures in profile. (Archev, 1956, p. 379.)

In general therefore we see the carving of free-standing human figures as common to the arts of all the Polynesian peoples, but with such clear-cut differences as to bespeak for them long periods of separation and independence.

In looking at the wood-carvers of Polynesia as practising craftsmen we see that it is our Maori who has handled body, limbs and features in the most freely stylized manner, and has bent them, all three, most thoroughly and successfully to decorative purpose. The frequency with which even free-standing figures carry a pose of ordered design indicates how deep seated has been this interest and influence in Maori art. The illustrations in this paper will have shown in what variety and with what versatility the Maori carver created full-figure sculpture, even within the compass of his interest in formal design.

This last comment does, however, bring us to thinking of the quality and status of the art we have been reviewing. We have heard the opinion expressed that Maori art is, or was at the time of European discovery, decadent, meaning we suppose that it was past its heyday and would not have developed new forms of expression even had it continued uninterrupted by European intrusion.

It is, indeed, part of the nature of things that the highly specialized—and Maori decorative art is undoubtedly that—should be the full flowering of any form, either in natural evolution or in human endeavour. New forms and the vigour of new growth spring from the rootstock or the basic stem. Thinking of this in respect to Maori wood-carving we recall that, although specialized, it was not merely an art of one single stereotyped style; it had created no less than five, two of which ran in quite different directions—towards highly involved curvilinear complexity on the one hand and to refined simplification, almost austere abstraction, on the other. Moreover it was still exhibiting enterprise and ingenuity in its basic compositions, that is in the grouping and design arrangement of almost naturalistic figures.

A thought aside at this point is that today's endeavour to revive Maori art might find quicker success through natural figure sculpture than through perpetuating the well-tried patterns of the past. But, returning to the question of the primary vigour and achievement of Maori sculpture as we know it, there is still the relevant point to which we have just drawn attention, namely, that already within the naturalism of its figure-rendering we see arising the first stages of formalism. In its incipient relief form it reveals a naturalism not free and untrammelled; in its manner of expressing facial emotion we see thus early a kind of decorative symbolism instead of natural emotional expression.



Are these tendencies, then, what our carvers could not help, or are they what they were aware of, were interested in, and intended? Were they, are they, the seeds of development or of decadence? It is a long standing question of art discussion and will probably be answered here as hitherto: *Quot homines tot sententiae.*

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND REFERENCES.

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1.

2.

(The measurement is the height of figure only, excluding base or support.)

1. Wooden figure (108 cm.); Opotiki District, A.M. 5167.
2. Wooden figure (95 cm.); locality unknown, probably northern Auckland province, A.M. 22737.

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1

2

1. *Waharoa* or palisade gateway (610 cm.); named Rangitakaroro (for the upper figure—lower is his brother Tapora); northern end of Lake Okataina, A.M. 6022.
2. *Pou rahui* (421 cm.); erected to mark the *tapu* area of the landslide (1846) that buried Te Heuheu Tukino I and his village, Tokaanu, Lake Taupo. A.M. 22051.



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Pukaki, an Arawa ancestor with his wife and children. Massive wooden figure (198 cm., originally considerably higher), Te Ngae, Lake Rotorua, A.M. 161.

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1

2

1. Palisade gateway (357 cm.); Pukeroa *pa*, Rotorua, A.M. 160.
2. *Tiki* (167 cm.); Wellington district, A.M. 18426.2.



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1. *Amo* (343 cm.) of verandah of carved meeting house named Hotunui, Parawai, Thames, A.M.

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1

2

Two carved *tiki*: 1. Tolaga Bay (180 cm.), A.M. 769.  
2. East Cape district (170 cm.), A. M. 154.

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6

*Tiki* and *pou*, a series showing degrees of natural and stylized rendering; note in 2 and 3 the hair binding treated in stylized, decorative manner. 1. Small figure (35 cm.), British Museum. 2. Basal figure of verandah support, *pou tokomanawa* (115 cm.); East Cape district, A.M. 163. 3. *pou tokomanawa* (109 cm.) of house Turanga, Dominion Museum. 4. Lower (93 cm.) of superimposed figures; locality unknown. A.M. 22070.2. 5. *pou pou* (138.5 cm.) locality unknown, A.M. 13988.1. 6. *pou pou* (97 cm.) from Arawa house Rangitihī, Rotorua; A.M. 5152.



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*Poupuu* (68.6 cm.); Turanga house, Gisborne. Dominion Museum.

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2

1

1. *Poufou* (136 cm.), Taupo district; A.M. 4717.
2. *Poufou* (190 cm.) from house Rangitihi, Rotorua. A.M. 5152.

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1

2

1. *Pou* (90 cm.) from gable end of a house; locality unknown. A.M. 9895.
2. *Pou* (— cm.) from gable end of house, Rangitahi, Rotoru. A.M. 5152.

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1

2

3

1. Superimposed *tiki* (167 cm.); locality unknown. A.M. 22070.2.
2. *Pou* (279 cm.) from end of house Rangitihi, Rotorua. A.M. 5152.
3. *Pou* (333 cm.) from end of house Rangitihi.

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3

*Pou* with superimposed figures. 1. (245 cm.); locality unknown. A.M. 22069.2. 2. (237 cm.) from house Rangitihi. A.M. 5152. 3. *Ngaruaeruae* (110 cm.) doorway from East Coast district. A.M. 184.

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*Pou* with complexity of figures: Locality Auckland (*teste* Hamilton's Maori Art p. 162). Present location unknown.



CHATHAM ISLAND CARVINGS

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*Tiki* carved in stone. Pitt Rivers  
Museum, Oxford. P.R.219(Q).

*Tiki* carved in wood. Auckland  
Museum, No. 1867.